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Gilles-Maurice DE SCHRYVER, *A Way with Words: Recent Advances in Lexical Theory and Analysis. A Festschrift for Patrick Hanks*

Mehna Publishers, 2010, 384 pages

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REFERENCES

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A Way with Words: Recent Advances in Lexical Theory and Analysis. A Festschrift for Patrick Hanks. Mehna Publishers, 2010. ISBN : 978-9970-101-01-6, Prix : 59,95 €, 384 pages

- 1 Patrick Hanks is a well-known lexicographer and corpus linguist, one time chief editor of English dictionaries at Oxford University Press, project manager of the first edition of the COBUILD dictionary, and chief editor of Collins English dictionaries. He is currently based at the University of the West of England (Bristol), and visiting professor at the University of Wolverhampton, and at the Charles University in Prague. The reviewed volume is a collection of 20 papers tackling different issues associated with Hanks' research and achievements, presented on the occasion of his 70th birthday.
- 2 The book consists of an introduction followed by three parts devoted to 'Theoretical Aspects and Background' (5 contributions), 'Computing Lexical Relations' (7 chapters), and 'Lexical Analysis and Dictionary Writing' (7 chapters); an index of subjects and names would have been a welcome addition.
- 3 In the introductory chapter, 'Getting to the Bottom of How Language Works', Gilles-Maurice de Schryver, the editor of the volume, discusses the origins and contents of the book, and provides appropriate background to Hanks's contribution to lexicography,

corpus linguistics, and lexical theory. He describes Hanks as “a linguistic theorist and empirical corpus analyst, also an onomastician, but above all [...] a lexicographer. He has a way with words” (p. 4). This ‘way with words’ is commented upon in most chapters which follow. In the addendum to the introduction, de Schryver lists the publications by Hanks (pp. 19-34).

- 4 Part One opens with ‘Defining the Definiendum’, an unfinished text by the late John Sinclair, an exemplary lexicographical analysis of one item, the word *sever*. Sinclair briefly discusses the core sense of the form, the selection of relevant prepositions, the colligation patterns, semantic preferences and semantic prosody and provides a corpus sample. The paper is unfinished but it provides an explicit demonstration of Sinclair’s approach to collocational analysis.
- 5 Yorick Wilks discusses ‘Very Large Entries and the Boundary Between Linguistic and Knowledge Structures’. The basic research question is: “How much information can lexical entries contain, and what is its role in coping with the representation of meaning projections, meanings that seem beyond the bounds of what is currently captured in a lexicon?” (p. 49), in other words, this is an inquiry into what can be done computationally with very large knowledge structures. Wilks analyzes the problem from the perspective of Preference Semantics for a natural language understanding system.
- 6 James Pustejovsky and Anna Rumshisky investigate the ‘Mechanisms of Sense Extension in Verbs’. The basic claim of this chapter is that the different degree of meaning extension results from a number of different formal processes operating on the predicates, such as “generalizing the type of the argument; changing the argument structure and relative prominence of arguments; and finally, abstracting the core meaning of the verb itself” (p. 67). The authors arrive at a very interesting conclusion, namely that metaphorical interpretations are structured and scalar in nature. The discussion is couched in the framework advocated over the years by Pustejovsky, and known as the Generative Lexicon.
- 7 Igor Mel’čuk focuses on ‘The Government Pattern in the Explanatory Combinatorial Dictionary’. He introduces the notion of (lexical) government in which the semantic actants of a lexeme are implemented on all levels of linguistic representation. Mel’čuk shows the importance of government for the Explanatory Combinatorial Dictionary, one of the core components of his Meaning-Text linguistic model. The chapter is highly technical and presupposes familiarity with Meaning-Text Theory.
- 8 The next chapter is by David Wiggins, a moral philosopher, metaphysician, and a philosopher of logic. His contribution deals with ‘The Paradox of Analysis and the Paradox of Synonymy’, and provides a very welcome philosophical perspective on definitions and lexical semantics. Wiggins very clearly shows how closely philosophical and lexical analyses may be connected, and how they can benefit from one another. In this context, he refers to his debt to Hanks: “What he showed me is how in English, whatever familiar verb you choose, if you set out a large and representative enough collection of contexts into which that verb will fit, then no other verb, however apparently similar in sense, will fit into all these contexts” (p. 128).
- 9 The second part of the book concentrates on computational lexicography and lexical relations. The chapter by Kenneth Church ‘More is More’ discusses the size of (Web) corpora, comments the controversy between the size and representativeness of corpora, with the title adequately indicating the author’s attitude: “More is more, despite criticism

- of Google-ology” (p. 135). Church also stresses the importance of search tools (including Google’s tools), and the recently changing access to data.
- 10 Gregory Grefenstette’s contribution deals with ‘Estimating the Number of Concepts’. The author estimates the number of multiword concepts that are used in English, probing the Web as the relevant corpus. The word ‘concept’ is understood here operationally, to mean something that is expressed using one or more words, hence the search for concepts is related to the search for words and possible combinations of words. The final estimation is that there are “about 200 million concepts that future computational lexicographers and linguists will have to find a way to model” (p. 154), though as Grefenstette himself admits, these might be “no doubt egregious approximations” (p. 144).
 - 11 In ‘Identifying Adjectives that Predict Noun Classes’ David Guthrie and Louise Guthrie study the effect of adjectives in predicting the semantic category of the nouns they modify. They make use of several different corpora and develop appropriate techniques to automatically determine the predictive power of an adjective. The applied methodology is rather technical (especially computing the entropy of adjectives), but the results of the experiments confirm that adjectives provide “a great deal of information about the semantic class of the nouns they modify” (p. 167).
 - 12 Alexander Geyken discusses ‘Statistical Variations of German Support Verb Constructions in Very Large Corpora’. The results of carefully planned and conducted research show very interesting – and far from obvious – correlates between statistical salience of verb-noun expressions and the size of analyzed corpora: “almost all verb-noun expressions in the dictionary are statistically salient in the 1-billion-token corpus; however, the same is not true for the 100-million-token corpus. Conversely, a considerable number of statistically salient constructions are missing in the dictionary” (p. 168).
 - 13 Karel Pala and Pavel Rychlý offer ‘A Case Study in Word Sketches – Czech Verb *vidět* ‘see’’. Word sketches are short summaries of a word’s grammatical and collocational properties generated by the Sketch Engine, a tool, combining statistical techniques with rules describing grammatical relations, designed for linguists and lexicographers to explore collocations in corpora. The authors discuss errors found in such word sketches and offer some solutions for correction.
 - 14 The next two chapters report on different aspects of Hanks’ *Pattern Dictionary of English Verbs* (PDEV), an ongoing project that aims to map meanings onto patterns of use. PDEV consists of three major parts: the patterns, semantic reference data (randomly selected from the BNC), and a hierarchical inventory of semantic types. Silvie Cinková, Martin Holub and Lenka Smejkalová discuss ‘The Lexical Population of Semantic Types in Hanks’s PDEV’, and report on a series of experiments conducted at the Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics of the Charles University in Prague. Next, Elisabetta Jezek and Francesca Frontini in ‘From Pattern Dictionary to Patternbank’, report on planning a ‘Patternbank’ for Italian and show its importance for further investigations of the relationships between lexical sets and semantic types.
 - 15 Contributions in the third part of the book center around lexical analysis and practical lexicography. Rosamund Moon’s paper, ‘Words that Spring to Mind: Idiom, Allusion, and Convention’, drawing on the data from the Bank of English corpus presents a study of the phraseology *spring to mind*. The author discusses in considerable detail the functions of this expression, also as correlated with speech acts, co-occurrence with idioms and other phrases, and its role in metalinguistic commentary. In conclusion she observes that

“words and phrases do not necessarily mean what they are said by dictionaries to mean, just as language does not necessarily behave in the way it is supposed to behave” (p. 263). Moon’s chapter perfectly illustrates the fact that in the description of language it is patterns of usage that count.

- 16 The contribution by Sue Atkins is devoted to ‘The DANTE Database: Its Contribution to English Lexical Research, and in Particular to Complementing the FrameNet Data’. The Database of Analysed Texts of English (DANTE) was commissioned by *Foras na Gaeilge* (the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language) for the purpose of the new English-Irish dictionary. Atkins comprehensively discusses the ways in which the DANTE database could be used to enrich other lexical bases, such as the FrameNet. After comparing the two bases, she presents the organization of valency constructions for nouns and additional material available through the DANTE base, and, in a case study of the verb *observe*, evaluates the possibilities of semi-automatic mapping entries between the two bases.
- 17 Adam Kilgariff and Pavel Rychlý devote their contribution to ‘Semi-Automatic Dictionary Drafting’. The major aim of this project is to achieve semi-automatic implementation within corpus patterns. The authors discuss problems which link technical aspects of philosophy of language with the study of the lexicon. They stress their debt to Hanks: “In his writings, lectures and conversation, Patrick shows the fathomless potential that words and phrases have – in consort with us, their embodied human vehicles – for making, breaking, layering and enriching the sum of our experience. In his account, while the role of communication is never downplayed, we see how lexis can join song in filling out the human soul” (p. 310).
- 18 Whereas the contributions mentioned above offered lexicographic case studies, Paul Bogaards in ‘Lexicography: Science without Theory?’ asks questions concerning the place of theory in lexicography. Bogaards briefly traces the origins of theory of lexicography (or metalexicography), its developments, content and relations with theoretical linguistics and other disciplines. He comments on the relative independence of lexicography as a separate area of academic study, but adds that “this independence has to be found in the kind of problems that are chosen as starting point, not in there being one independent theory covering all the aspects of the subject field” (p. 318).
- 19 Mirosław Bańko concentrates on an interesting chapter in local, in this case Polish, lexicography. His paper, ‘The Polish COBUILD and its Influence on Polish Lexicography’ convincingly demonstrates how one project influenced the development of lexicography in a different country, with different lexicographic traditions. He discusses the COBUILD project and its adaptation to a Polish monolingual dictionary, *Inny słownik języka polskiego*, an innovative general-purpose dictionary of Polish. He focuses not only on the technical details and differences with other Polish dictionaries, but also on marketing problems. Bańko also observes, in apparent contrast to some other contributors in the volume, that lexicography changes slowly, however, this remark is not concerned with the technical developments, but rather with the fact that “tradition in lexicography is not less important than innovation” (p. 330).
- 20 Jonathon Green’s short essay, ‘ARGOT: The Flesh Made Word’, is devoted to the place of argot in early French lexicography. And the final contribution, Michael Rundell’s ‘Defining Elegance’ is an elegant, and well-researched essay on contemporary

lexicography combining detailed lexical analysis (of 'elegance', in a very broad context) with paying tribute to Patrick Hanks.

- 21 The reviewed book is far more than an ordinary festschrift; it not only honours a major figure in contemporary lexicography and computational linguistics, but also provides interesting examples of genuine research of very high quality. It offers diverse case studies and up to date theoretical insights.